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ABSTRACT

Approaches to elementary social studies education that focus on concept and inquiry learning are outlined. The basic goal of the teacher in concept teaching is to aid the student in developing relationships among factual learning, conceptualization, and personal behavior. Learning activities should focus on the process concept (i.e., one that is transferable and generalizable) rather than the descriptive concept which provides only partial factual material about complex human events. Teachers can teach process conceptualization by designing learning activities that consider the generalizability of concepts, how data can be presented by use of alternative media, how student growth will be evaluated, how the activity will aid students in conceptualizing human activity, and whether the activity is relevant to students. For example, one existing program focuses on the concepts of cultural change, cooperation, interdependence, causality, and differences. Finally, curriculum content should be drawn from organized scholarly disciplines, concentrate on methods of inquiry, and appeal to student imaginations. (KC)

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Teaching Conceptually Oriented Social Science Education Programs In The Elementary School

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the New York State Council for the Social Studies (41st, Syracuse, NY, April 9-11, 1981).

It has been nearly thirty years since Ralph Preston characterized the social studies "as a body without spirit in certain schools and all spirits and no body in others." More recently some social studies scholars (e.g., Ploghoft, 1968) have expressed similar characterizations of this curricular area as the "foggy bottom" of school curriculum. Comments such as these underscore the muddled state of affairs surrounding the aims and substance of this aspect of schooling. Indeed it was not until about 1916 that a major professional education organization (the National Education Association) called for the study of "modern problems" at the secondary level and suggested that life problems be approached from a multidisciplinary perspective, of which history would serve as only one of several elements. While the NEA maintained a strong force for developing a multidisciplinary approach to the teaching of the emerging field of the social studies, it must be stated that in fact the field was largely viewed as dominated by history and geography. It was not until the 1960's that curriculum projects in the social studies stressed the contributions of the full range of the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, history, geography, and social psychology) in the instructional approaches utilized and in the content of the elementary school social studies. Nonetheless, the predominant approach to social studies projects then and now continues to be centered about a single social science discipline which more often than not was, and is, history.

It would be tempting to suggest the following the social studies of the 1960's teachers, parents, and professors of education have deliberately implemented a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach to this area of the elementary curriculum. A more accurate observation of current practice suggests a somewhat deliberate, albeit, broken front in the pursuit of a comprehensive social science curriculum. In too many elementary classrooms social studies

still means the dispensing of descriptive information from textbooks, that have at their core, methodologies and substance singularly drawn from history or perhaps geography. Such a reality is far from the one envisioned in the report of the NEA in 1916 and since expanded upon by scholars in the field (Joyce, 1965; Krug, 1967, and Michaelis, 1968).

If we as teachers and teacher educators are to view this aspect of elementary curriculum as more than history or geography per se then from what vantage point is this discipline to be properly understood? One emerging theme is that sometimes associated with educators and scholars who advance the so-called 'new social studies' or more appropriately social science education. One spokesman for this emerging perspective suggests that elementary social science education should enable children to explore social topics in such a fashion that they learn to apply - rather than merely memorize - the intellectual tools of the social sciences (Joyce, 1965). Still others have suggested that traditional elementary social studies has been overly concerned with the memorization of factual information drawn in the main from history, geography and civics, while largely ignoring an emphasis on the problem solving and decision making of the anthropologist, sociologist or historian and geographer. Clearly the disproportionate emphasis on recall and memorization at the expense of the more powerful outcomes of application of social science processes lies at the heart of our continuing dilemma regarding the proper function of this crucial aspect of the elementary curriculum. Two writers have described the essential elements that may help us distinguish viable social science programs from the traditional social studies (Ploghoft & Shuster, 1977, p. 221 and 245):

1. High priority is given to the active role of the child as an inquirer into the social environment in which he or she lives and learns.

2. Information and investigation modes from the several social science disciplines are used when appropriate in the child's inquiries.

3. Con cept development is fostered within the realm of child experience inasmuch as the social science concepts operate there as well as they do in the adult world (e.g., justice, authority, scarcity and so on).

4. Process - and problem-centered, with emphasis on ways and purposes of inquiry and upon concept information.

5. Identification and analysis of facts and generalizations.

6. Evaluate pupil growth in terms of behavioral objectives which involve the skills of inquiry and use data.

7. Interdisciplinary-uses data from all disciplines as needed to study any problem.

8. Child is evaluated on his ability to identify, locate and apply pertinent information.

A recent doctoral dissertation study (Welton, 1970) in the midwest attempted to locate the essential defining characteristics of conceptual social science programs. The results revealed the following emphases:

1. Structural concepts, themes and generalizations from social sciences.

2. Inductive,inquiry oriented teaching methodologies.

3. Wide variety of media and classroom materials.

4. Minimal rote learning in which course substance was viewed as a means rather than an end in itself.

5. Cross-cultural studies.

6. Study of the contemporary world at all grade levels.

7. Teaching of values and valuing processes.

8. Depth studies of few topics as opposed to surveys of many topics.

9. Critical thinking skills.

10. Understanding discipline structure and knowledge generating strategies.

It can be seen that programs characterized by these elements differ markedly from older programs in two fundamental ways: content and process. Traditionally social studies content has been viewed as textual material to be memorized and that these learnings were more or less temporally bound to "the social studies" class. Newer conceptualizations focus on these traditional elements but extend to include problems and learning resources that are essential to "scientific inquiry" processes. Bruner (1960), Phenix (1964) and others have argued that the structure of the disciplines (history, sociology, etc.) provide the concepts and inquiry tools that can be used in structuring pupil activities in social science education. The instructional process is altered considerably as well. The teacher's role under newer conceptualizations is that of the 'senior research advisor' helping children expand social science inquiries far beyond that of the 'normal classroom'. The basic goal of the teacher is to aid the student in developing functional relationships between factual learnings, conceptualizations and his behaviors. As teachers we are well aware that helping children 'know' about phenomena does not insure that this knowledge will ipso facto translate to action/behavior, i.e., knowing that does not equal knowing how. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the so-called newer social science programs over older social studies programs is in the way conceptualization is nutured and how this process is related to pupil behaviors, both cognitive and social. Within newer program models conceptualizing is held as a more complex process than memorization, although clearly, memorization is involved in the conceptualization process. A fundamental goal is to attach social science concepts to real life experiences, the result is that which Ploghoft (1977) calls a 'useful concept'. Stated another way a social science concept is said to be more powerful if it allows for greater generalizability. Consider two examples:

> The fall of Vicksburg & Lee's failure at Gettysburg in July, 1863 destroyed the last chances of a confederate victory.
>
> All nations must make economic decisions which form the bases of their economic system (p. 14, 5th grade, NYS, Social Studies Curriculum Guide, 1980).

Brophy & Good (1978) writing about different conceptual level of questions refer to the first statement as a product level (i.e., low-level) concept, a dsecriptive statement of a unique phenomenon taking place at a particular place and time. Mallan (1967) refers to such concepts as singular, i.e., it does not lend itself to functional transferability. Descriptive conceptualizing has been the exclusive focus of much time and student activity and enjoys remarkable public and to some extent professional support as a means of promoting basic skills and factual data acquisition.

In contrast, the second statement is one Brophy & Good would classify as a process level concept. Represented here are elements of human social life which are characterized by permanence and globalness. People make decisions about what and how to produce goods and services, how to combine and use resources in the production process, how goods and services will be distributed throughout the society and so forth. It is apparent that the process statement has power and application, whereas the product statement has little functional value beyond providing partial factual material of complex human events in American life.

The task of planning learning activities for pupils that facilitate the formation of process concepts is understandably viewed as a more demanding task by teachers than product level ones. Some research currently in progress by the author demonstrates vividly the differences involved. A fifth grade teacher has volunteered to aid in the development of process level instructional activities for her students in a social studies unit on industrialism in the

United States. Preliminary results from teacher planning and student work time indicate that considerably more time is required in those process level areas than in product ones. These results will come as no surprise to classroom teachers. Perhaps less obvious is the answer to the question: Does the teaching and testing of facts (product level knowledge) "...offer a temptation to ignore the more serious goals of education" (Shuster & Ploghoft, 1977, p. 223)?

As teachers we can begin to grow in our abilities to teach higher level conceptualization by asking certain questions prior to the design of learning activities:

1. What are the intended learning outcomes of this activity:
   a. memorize factual data?
   b. analyze and compare sets of data?
   c. interpret data and draw appropriate conclusions?
2. What is the potential for generalizability of the concepts currently under study for new questions and problems in and out of school?
3. How can the relevant data be presented given alternative media modes?
4. On what basis is pupil growth, in several dimensions, to be evaluated?
5. Will this activity better aid children in conceptualizing human activity in its broadest sense?
6. Is it relevant and of concern to youngsters?

Identifying relevant concepts for teaching.

Several pedagogical models provide for a continuous process of problem identification, data collection, organizing, analysis and evaluation options that allow for the development of high priority concepts. Few teachers will be satisfied to teach from a few books and trust that their students will develop concepts as a result of reading, reciting and writing alone. As

evidenced by more current social science programs, the approaches taken are far more deliberate in their approach to pupil conceptual growth. Recent analyses of the texts currently available in the field, however, indicate that not all have been planned and written for conceptually oriented programs.

The ideas of Hilda Taba have remained prominent in the efforts of educators to clarify the major concepts that should be included in the social science activities of students. For example, the Contra Costs program (Taba & Hill, 1965) identified five major concept areas for the first level of their program and were selected for "...their power to organize and to symbolize vast amounts of information" (Taba & Hill, 1965, p. 9). The conceptual areas identified by Taba & Hill are cultural change, cooperation, interdependence, causality and difference. The design of the program involves grade level differentiations focused around the authors main ideas that provide a mechanism for attaining mastery of program goals.

A program that is also illustrative of a conceptual approach is the Syracuse University Project (Hickman, Price & Smith, 1965). This project involved the integrated efforts of scholars from several social science disciplines and were directed by the task of identifying the concepts that they felt should be included in the social science programs of schools. These efforts at identifying concepts from a multidiscipline perspective resulted in a unique and substantively powerful set of concepts that can serve to guide program selection and development.

A. Substantive: concepts that deal with recall or recognition of ideas from phenomena within the social science, e.g.,
   1. Power
   2. Secularization
   3. Conflict

4. Comparative advantage
5. Sovereignty
6. Compromise
7. Industrialization
8. Morality and choice
9. Security
10. Input and output
11. Habitat and its sifnificance
12. Culture

B. Value: concepts that deal with questions of attitude, beliefs, and principles, e.g.,
   1. Dignity of man
   2. Empathy
   3. Loyalty
   4. Government by consent of the governed
   5. Freedom and equality

C. Method: concepts that deal with techniques, skills, and aspects used in obtaining information. They are broader methodological concepts that cut across the lines of all the social science discipline, e.g.,
   1. Historical method and perspective
   2. The geographical approach
   3. Causation

D. Techniques and aspects of method: these are akills and/or behaviors and not concepts as such, but are developed within the context of inquiry methodology and conceptual approaches to teaching social sciences, e.g.,
   1. Observation and measurement
   2. Analysis and Synthesis

3. Questions and answers
4. Objectivity
5. Skepticism
6. Interpretation
7. Evaluation
8. Evidence

Current works in social science education also represent an attempt to elaborate a philosophical theory of the curriculum for general education based on the idea of logical patterns in disciplines understanding. As Phenix (1964) states: "The central thesis is that knowledge in the discipline has patterns or structures, and that an understanding of these typical forms is essential for the guidance of teaching and learning" (p. x). The works of Phenix, and other scholars, grows out of a concept of human nature as rooted in meaning and of human life as directed toward the fulfillment of meaning. The various patterns of knowledge are varieties of meaning according to Phenix. To learn these patterns is to know effective realization of essential humanness through the curriculum of general education. The following represents a conceptual overview of Phenix's curriculum model:

Purpose of Education - To promote the growth of meaning.

Objective - General Education is the process of engendering essential meanings.

Nature of man - Humans are beings who discover, create, and express meanings. Moreover, human meanings extend across a broad spectrum, encompassing all the unique qualities of mind described by the scientists and scholars who study human nature.

Dimensions of meaning:

1. Experience - reflectiveness and self-awareness.

2. Rule, logic, or principle - each type of meaning has its own rule that makes it one kind of meaning and not another.
3. Selective elaboration - the kinds of meaning that have been selected for their proven capacity for elaboration are to be found by reference to the world of disciplined scholarship.
4. Expression - meanings that have civilizing power are communicable. The communication of meanings takes place through symbols.

Nature of society -

1. Meanings are relational
2. Particular social factors are more relevant to curriculum of specialized education than of general education. The nature of society is reflected in the character and distribution of its specialized occupations. It follows that particular social needs have less relevance to the curriculum of general education that the curriculum of specialized education.
3. Spirit of criticism and skepticism causes validity of meanings to be questioned.
4. Perversive depersonalization and fragmentation of life caused by extreme specialization of a complex, interdependent society.
5. Mass of cultural products, especially knowledge, which man is required to assimilate.
6. Rapid change resulting in a pervasive feeling of impermanence and insecurity.

Curriculum & Instruction: Social Science

1. General education to render meaning to life. Scope - throughout formal schooling

Selection -

a. Specialized disciplines as most dependable and rewarding resource for instructional materials.

b. Items of material should be selected that are particularly representative of the field as a whole.

c. Content should be chosen so as to exemplify the methods of inquiry and the modes of understanding in the discipline studies.

d. Materials should be chosen such as to arise imagination.

"According to this principle, ordinary life-situations and the solving of everyday problems should not be the basis for curriculum content. The life of meaning is far better served by using materials that tap the deeper levels of experience."

2. Logical classification of meanings -

Generic classes			
Quantity	Quality	Realms of meaning	Disciplines
General	Form	Symbolica	Ordinary language, mathematics, non-discursive symbolic forms
General	Fact	*Empirics	Physical sciences, life sciences, psychology, social sciences
Singular	Form	Esthetics	Music, visual arts, arts of movement, literature
Singular	Fact	Synnoetics	Philosophy, psychology, literature, religion, in their existential aspects
Singular	Norm	Ethics	The varied special areas of moral and ethical concern
Comprehensive	Fact		History
Comprehensive	Norm	Synoptics	Religion
Comprehensive	Form		Philosophy

*Empirics include the sciences (physical and social).

According to Phenix these sciences provide factual data, generalizations and theoretical formulations and explanations which are based upon observation and experimentation in the world of matter, life, mind, and society. They express meanings as probable empirical truths framed in accordance with certain rules of evidence and verification and make use of specified systems of analytic abstraction (p. 6). According to Phenix, of the social sciences, anthropology clearly stands as the most comprehensive because it allows for the study of all aspects of the man-made world, from languages and tools to law, manners and religion. Sociology is also seen as comprehensive, but more restrictive in concepts and methods and thus for young learners perhaps better suited than anthropology to illustrate social science as a distinctive domain of science.

THE SCHOLARLY DISCIPLINES CRITERION:

PRINCIPLES OF SELECTION OF CURRICULUM CONTENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS ACCORDING TO PHILIP PHENIX (IN REALMS OF MEANING)

1. Discrimination between disciplined and undisciplined materials.
    1. Drawn from organized, scholarly disciplines.
        a. An organized field of inauiry pursued by a particular group of men of knowledge may be called a scholarly discipline.
        b. Demands public scholars using public standards of knowledge and inquiry.
        c. Disciplines contain knowledge, the understanding of which is an objective of instruction; hence, within the disciplines the educator should find his content.
        d. Excludes common sense approach to knowledge - or searching outside the scholarly disciplines.

e. The appropriate content of general education is, therefore, to be secured from specialists in the several disciplines.

f. The task of the teacher is to humanize the knowledge of the disciplines.

II. Content should be chosen so as to exemplify the representative ideas of the disciplines.

1. Representative ideas are concepts that afford an understanding of the main features of the discipline. They exhibit its distinctive logic.
2. Representative ideas are principles of growth and simplification.
3. Representative ideas may be arranged in hierarchical order.
   a. Characterize the discipline in all the paths.
   b. Those corollary ideas suggested by primary ones.
   c. Organizing principles for large subdivisions of discipline.
   d. Those pertaining to special problems and areas of the subject.
   e. Applications of general concepts to particular cases and holding within specified conditions.
4. While there may be differences in ideas of basic structure, the main objective is that some defensible organization of ideas in each discipline is achieved.
5. Selection of representative ideas is job of the scholar.
6. Representative ideas are not necessarily content for instruction, rather their function is to guide the selection of learnable content so that it will exemplify the characteristic features of the disciplines.
7. "The particulars of instruction should be representative, typical, or paradigmatic materials, their representativeness being measured by how well they show the typical features of the disciplines they are supposed to illuminate."

III. One especially significant set of representative ideas are the methods of inquiry and they should guide the selection of curriculum content.

1. Understanding methods of inquiry because the change slowly overcomes:
   a. synicism - a clear means to acquisition of knowledge.
   b. fragmention - methods bind together.
   c. surfeit - if one possesses the tools of inquiry, he is not in need of a large share of accumulated knowledge.
   d. transcience - methods change much more slowly than do the results of applying them.
2. The essence of learning science is to think like scientists think.
3. The method of teaching guided re-discovery at the level appropriate to the individual learner.
4. Two types of inquiry - discovery and validation.
5. Contrary to experimentalist thought does not follow only one logical pattern. Different methods of inquiry in six realms (at least).
6. The method of teaching for any discipline is simply to provide experiences that encourage the students to engage actively in inquiry according to the patterns of discovery and validation characteristic of the discipline being studied.
7. The method chosen in any given unit, course, program or curriculum depends upon the intention of the teacher or curriculum worker - be it to communicate, to describe and explain, to create interesting perceptual forms, to gain direct existential insight, to respond to the claims of conscience, to gain a comprehensive perspective, or to fulfill any combination of these intentions.

IV. Materials for instruction should always be selected so as to appeal to the

imagination of the students.

1. Central problem is motivation of students.
2. Fundamental human motivation is the search for meaning. Imagination is the power that renders one's experience vitally meaningful.
3. Imagination is a form of ecstacy in which one is lifted out of himself and transported to a higher level of existence.
4. If motivation is believed to spring from the higher human functions, curriculum content will be chosen so as to maximize meanings.
5. The principle of imagination calls for selection of materials that are drawn from the extraordinary rather than from the experience of everyday life.
6. Content selected on this basis is even more necessary for the slow than for the able learner.
7. The means for kindling imagination are different for different humans.
8. The teacher should exhibit an imaginary quality of mind.
9. One should maintain an unconditional faith in the possibility of realizing meaning through awakened imagination in any and every student, no matter what appearances may indicate to the contrary.

Application

The Far West Regional Laboratory publishes A Sourcebook of Elementary Curricula Programs which describes programs that have materials intended for use in schools where the curriculum thrust is toward conceptually oriented social science education programs. Two examples are: Field Social Studies Program - Publisher: Field Educational Publications, Palo Alto, Ca. (Figure 1) and Man: A Course of Study - Publisher: Curriculum Development Associates, Washington, D.C. (Figure 2).

Figure 1

Field Social Studies Program

Orientation	Target Audience	Content Emphasis	Project Goals	Unit Sequencing	Instructional Method	Student Roles	Teacher Roles
Inquiry conceptual approach 3 parts-inquiry processes, concepts and settings. 12 texts	K-11 all ability levels.	SocSc concepts, processes and Settings Ex.: Gr. 2)-meat and daily industry. Inquiry process of observation and hypothesizing while learning about labor and production.	Conceptual objectives Factual knowledge from SocSc. Inquiry objectives-observing, defining, classifying, interpreting, analyzing, hypothesizing, synthesizing and evaluating. Skill objectives. Affecting objectives.	Suggested K-11 and grade sequence but much flexibility is possible.	Inquiry - conceptual approach. 3 step pattern: 1. motivation, 2. developmental activities, and 3. end of unit activities	Observe interpret, generalize & evaluate indepen-dently where possible	Tutor No formal training required. Create and maintain a climate conducive to student inquiry.

Figure 2

Man: A Course of Study

Orientation	Target Audience	Content Emphasis	Project Goals	Unit Sequencing	Instructional Method	Student Roles	Teacher Roles
Based on cultural anthropology. Focuses on impulses and behaviors that unite man and other species. Built around a film series and related media.	5th grade, all ability levels.	Life cycles, ecology, environment, biological and social structures, behaviors and values	Development of the intellect, respect for powers of thought concerning the human condition. Concern for the human condition in all its forms.	According to increasingly complex life forms, using concepts such as structure and function, and and behavior and environment as base structures.	Question raising, discussion, hypothesizing, observation.	Share observations, ask questions, search for new information, hypothesize. Discuss, reflect, read, talk, make pictures.	Resource person. Views class as a "community learners." [17]

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